



Synthesis of Community Input

September 25, 2017 Public Forum
Held at Partners Healthcare Assembly Room
399 Revolution Drive, Somerville MA

I. Introduction

The September 25 Public Forum was the Lower Mystic Regional Working Group's (LMRWG) second and final community engagement event to seek public input before the LMRWG finishes its modeling activities and provides study recommendations in early 2018. Previously, the LMRWG held a public meeting in November 2016, conducted an online survey in fall 2016, and held seven discussion groups with community members, interest groups, and advocates in early 2017.

II. Public Forum Goals

The goals of the Forum were to explain the LMRWG's objectives and process, describe the options studied and the results of their modeling, help participants weigh local and regional concerns, and solicit community input on the options that the Working Group studied. This input will be used to inform the recommendations of the LMRWG.

III. Meeting Format

The meeting began with an open house in which participants reviewed the options the LMRWG studied by visiting poster stations attended by LMRWG members and staff. LMRWG staff then gave a formal presentation in which the Working Group's goals, process, and analyses were explained in more detail. LMRWG staff then took public comment and questions from participants, moderated by a facilitator from the Consensus Building Institute. Finally, participants were encouraged to return to the poster stations to examine the options under consideration and share their feedback, including ranking and explaining their preferences. Participants gave feedback by writing comments on cards and ranking their preferred options with sticky dots on a poster.

IV. Summary of Feedback

At least 93 participants attended the September 25 Forum, with representation from residents of the three Cities in the Scenario Focus Area: Everett, Somerville, and Boston, including residents from the neighborhood of Charlestown. The LMRWG received feedback using the following formats at the Forum:

- Approximately 20 participants provided public comments or questions
- Forty participants submitted written comments
- Participants placed 138 sticky dots on posters to indicate their preferred options to pursue (participants were given up to 3 dots each)

Two letters were also sent to the Working Group in the days following the Forum.

a. Sticky dot tallies of preferred options

Option	# dots
Major Bike/Pedestrian (including pedestrian bridges)	28
Bus Improvements & TMA Shuttles	22
Bike/Pedestrian Improvements	21
Transportation Demand Management	15
Silver Line Extension	13
Orange Line Spur to Everett (3-stop)	9
Orange Line Headways Improvements	8
93NB City Square On-Ramp	8
Green Line Extension to Mystic Valley Parkway	7
93NB Sullivan Square Off-Ramp	3
New Orange Line Station at River's Edge	2
Orange Line Spur to Route 1 (5-stop)	1
New Commuter Rail Station at Sullivan Square on the Rockport/Newburyport Line	1

b. Comments from participants, grouped by theme¹

Comments on the study:

- It's important to compare options based on the impact to individual people's travel experiences — travel times, crowding, more than congestion and vehicle-oriented metrics. The scenario metrics now show just one per-person metric (transit crowding) compared with poor congestion metrics. Please compare based on trip travel times, per-person delay differences, and other person-centered metrics.
- The scope for this project is much too small. The problems are regional.
- We need to work together as neighbors. Need to figure out what annoys us and also what we want to create together.
- Goal should be to increase mobility for people not using cars.

Safety:

- Safety is not measured as a benefit/disadvantage — should be a metric!
- Priority is bicycle/pedestrian safety and incentives.

¹ If written comments addressed different issues distinctly, sentences were divided into the relevant sections. If comments addressed or linked multiple issues together, they were repeated in the relevant sections.

- We need safety. People bike year-round. It is too scary to ride down lower Broadway and 99.

Bike and pedestrian:

- PLEASE build SAFE continuous lanes.
- Make sure pedestrian ways over Mystic are high enough for sailboat
- Priority is bicycle/pedestrian safety and incentives.
- Segregated bike lanes particularly on Gilmore Bridge is a must!
- Everett Resident, Bike to the Sea Board member, all year long bike commuter to Back Bay; if bike path is built and safe, bike commute ridership goes up dramatically.
- It is not nice to walk to the Sullivan Square T-stop right now. For people in East Somerville, there is no entrance without walking all around the stop into Sullivan Square traffic circle.
- Complete Community Path in Somerville to connect Minute Man trail to Charles River paths. That will improve bike ridership and is a safe route — also connect to Grand Junction Path — to provide access to Kendall.
- If you want to encourage people to bike year-round, then PLOW THE BIKE LANES and stop dumping snow (from the road) onto bike paths + lanes! Also, ticket people who park in bike lanes! Gilmore bridge is very dangerous to bike across. Please make it safer. Thank you!
- Yes, pedestrian bridges over Mystic and Malden Rivers — create loops that people can bike + exercise.
- We need safety. People bike year-round. It is too scary to ride down lower Broadway and 99.
- Love bike lanes. I risk my life on by bike. The bridges are a great idea -- on the other side of Route 16 too. Connect to bike trail that goes all the way to Revere
- The bridge from Charlestown to Kendall is starting to turn into bumper to bumper. It is shared with bikes and pedestrians. If there was a separate bike path to go over, traffic reduction alone thanks to the separate bike path would be enormous.
- We need the full Somerville Community Path. The Grand Junction Path has the potential to create a direct route straight into Kendall.

Roads and roadway infrastructure:

- I am concerned to see you are considering eliminating the HOV lane. If you take it away, you can never get it back. Have considered extending HOV or adding it Northbound? Buses and transit are impacted most by eliminating HOV
- Increasing lanes = more cars, which is bad.
- How do you model bad/illegal driving (double-parking/driving in bike lanes)? These impact traffic.
- Given the increased population of Charlestown and the casino, how can we accommodate all this traffic without more roads?
- Northbound 93 on-ramp in City Square sounds excellent.

- Keep HOV on 1-93, but eliminate barriers that prevent access to Somerville, Cambridge, and Medford to boost utilization and capacity.
- We need to revisit the surface option for the impact area as a top priority. All roads will lead to the casino and many of them go through Charlestown.
- Find a way to keep congestion out of Sullivan Square. Empty all traffic at casino. Thank you.
- Please model other surface options (sans underpass) including a CGI (continuous flow intersection) a Michigan Left (like Casey Blvd in Boston) and a system of 1-way couplets.
- This does not alleviate any traffic.
- The options that were given were helpful to show what can be done in already congested roadways. Hopefully with alternate routes and improvement with the direction of traffic it will help the residents in the area have a quicker commute.
- Traffic enforcement is key for any solutions to work.
- I-93 northbound onramp is a good idea. This connection is missing. Should have connection from City Square tunnel. Model seems to be missing the non-hazardous cargo and vehicular traffic from Beach are trying to get to 93 N and having to use 99
- Try to look beyond Sullivan Square. As the only way through.
- Build I-93 NB ramp, probably adjacent to [Tobin?] Bridge entrance
- Limit route the to 2 lanes each direction
- Do not build tunnels into Sullivan — it's a flooding risk with climate change
- Yes to new ramp off existing off-ramp from 93 to Sullivan — having specific ramp or people going from 93 to 99 will be a big help. Yes 93 Northbound ramp from City Square if it doesn't impact any green space. Yes, convert 93 HOV lane.
- Congestion in Sullivan Square/Charlestown is an issue felt acutely by local residents and poses safety issues to get out of congestion.
- If you build it, they will come. But you can control the queuing. You can alleviate a lot of the crisscross traffic. The issue is that you have to control queuing of commuters. We as residents need to get in and out – we can't right now.
- Gilmore bridge. Appears something funny about signal timing. Seems like traffic backs up on bridge but cars are whizzing by on McGrath.

Transit:

- Thank you for your effort. In the long run — T stops in Everett Sq. and Glendale Square will finally bring Everett into Boston.
- Do the BRT routes require a bus maintenance facility? How do you measure BRT costs: vehicles, operations, right of way improvements?
- Reliable transit service from a commuter garage at Copeland Circle could be accomplished by having dedicated bus lanes on the viaduct and Mystic River Bridge. MassDOT will be conducting a natural experiment through lane closures over the next few years. This will cut by one third the number of vehicles spewing exhaust in environmental justice communities. Bus lanes would connect to new dedicated infrastructure on New Washington to Haymarket. This will alleviate bottlenecks at both City Square and Copeland Circle where three lanes go to two. Dedicated bus lanes would

cost significantly less than a \$6 billion tunnel and could provide better and more reliable service from Everett, Revere, and Chelsea as well as Saugus and north garage for commuters could still be built at Copeland Circle.

- We should be using (proposing) the Grand Junction right of way for connections through Cambridge to West Station and Allston Yards. We need a new line along this right of way from the airport to West Station entirely off road. Whatever happens to Suffolk Downs it will need more transit than the Blue Line.
- Charlestown shuttle very interesting but streets width (Green, Mystic) are too narrow for MBTA, and Gilmore Bridge congestion makes it impossible.
- Bus improvements are very welcome — they need to be coupled with rapid transit lanes.
- It is not nice to walk to the Sullivan Square T-stop right now. For people in East Somerville, there is no entrance without walking all around the stop into Sullivan Square traffic circle.
- Potential commuter rail stop at Wynn should be modeled
- BRT in mixed traffic makes no sense. There should be a plan and the possibility to electrify the entire BRT row.
- Why is no one looking at EMUs and DMUs
- Dedicated bus lanes everywhere, including 93 Northbound and 93 Southbound.
- No commuter rail stop at Sullivan Station — it will increase UFP pollution and provide minimal improvement in reducing cars.
- Orange Line to Route 1 would be great but concerned about cost and impact on current property owners.
- Yes, commuter rail stop at Sullivan North — seems like a no-brainer if we can use existing rail lines.
- Sullivan Square commuter rail. When I was in East Somerville, I don't think anyone living in the area (myself included) cared about people on the North Shore going to Cambridge. Now, that connection could save me 45 minutes per day commuting to Kendall and make it easier to visit my old neighborhood. Please build it!
- Indigo Line. EMU service to stations in Sullivan, Everett, Chelsea, Wonderland, River Works, Lynn and possibly Swampscott would do a lot of good. Electrification is a MUST since electric trains accelerate faster and won't commit us to 30+ years of diesel fumes and noise complaints. They also make it easier to run shorter, cheaper trains on the weekend instead of cutting service.
- We were promised the Green Line in Somerville
- Buses are overcrowded. We have a problem with MBTA funding. Transit is a huge issue for every successful city to invest in.
- The third track at Sullivan Station could be used as an express train from Sullivan to Wellington.

Transportation demand management:

- Make sure that TMA's are complemented for Assembly Square and Wynn

- Yes to charging cars that make trips into the region from outside the area (like London does).
- Parking hubs at edges of study area, to shuttle (express?) downtown
- Toll the Alford St. Bridge. This will significantly decrease traffic in and out of Sullivan Square. Revenue will be nice but this will divert people (like autos without fares) who are avoiding the Mystic and tunnels. All you need to do is put up gantries.
- Consider TDM policies and parking limits on commercial development — not just residential. TDM policies and parking limits need to be enforced regionally through MOV or other legal mechanism, and should apply to changes to existing permitted development (e.g. casino, Assembly Row) and not just new — when they seek approvals for project changes the requirements should kick in.
- I get the sense that most of the traffic benefits of roadway changes will be very short-lived as the population and development increase (due to induced demand) — the only changes that will provide lasting benefits are those that increase public transit, biking, and walking, and also TDM policies.
- More park and drives outside LMRWG area.
- If parking requirements were reduced, transit would need to be extended much further -- i.e. Orange Line to Andover, etc.
- In Everett, we have a problem getting sufficient parking spots when they develop something. Will you only rent to people who don't have a car?
- Can a TMA system be developed for schoolchildren not served by school buses? The policy should be changed to allow children 12 and older to use the school buses since they are often empty.
- Congestion pricing is needed in concert with good public transportation, which is currently underfunded.
- Why are parking maximums only being considered for residential and not commercial development? Maximums for commercial development would be more impactful.

Land use:

- Mixed-income housing and affordable housing in Sullivan Square.
- Most plans have too much new pavement. We want more green space, bike paths, sidewalks, trees.
- Make sure Sullivan Square ends up with manageable parcels for rational development
- The Sullivan Square area should be a “connector hub” for the pedestrians and residents in the adjoining neighborhoods. I hope that gets worked into the urban design.
- The City of Boston recently took a big step backward and away from the CMRWG’s vision with its new proposal for underpasses at Sullivan Square and Austin St. LMRWG should suggest to City of Boston that they reconsider.
- Sullivan itself. I hope the casino hasn't forced you to throw away too much work, because I was very happy with the BRA's work and got the impression my neighbors were too.
- Consider reducing the lanes and making a boulevard in Charlestown. Investments should be made to maintain and improve the streets with buffers, green space, and

sidewalks rather than the tunnel. If you make Rutherford less attractive as a pass-through then the community can move around more easily.

- The tax advantages to developers to create transit-oriented development need to be weighed against available funds to invest in transportation.

Water transportation:

- Water transportation is important
- Water transportation would be appreciated
- Water transportation important to include in next presentation. It creates another “road”.
- What about commuter boat services? I know Wynn is planning on having a water shuttle. Any way to work in partnership among MBTA, Wynn, Boston Harbor Coalition, and Everett?

Climate change and environment:

- Climate change/resiliency should be considered among criteria for evaluation.
- Do not build tunnels into Sullivan — it’s a flooding risk with climate change
- Air quality. I could taste the air in Sullivan Square after returning from a trip out of state. It was disgusting and I'm glad I'm not breathing it any more. This is the excuse we all used for rejecting the commuter rail suggestion, but the real problem is a giant power plant and enormous amounts of highway traffic at all hours of the day.
- Climate change. If the project area is going to be underwater in 30-50 years, please don't waste our time and money there!
- Sea level rise jeopardizes the tunnel.
- There are statistically proven higher levels of cancer in my neighborhood. Sound barriers help improve noise and air pollution. It was a travesty that 93 cut through the neighborhood to begin with.